DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 140 942 PS 009 312

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TITLE Learning Resources Center: Increasing Parent Competence.
INSTITUTION Louisville and Jefferson County Community Coordinated Child Care, Ky.
PUB DATE Feb 77
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at "Toward the Competent Parent: An Interdisciplinary Conference on Parenting" (Atlanta, Georgia, February 21-22, 1977) ; Parts of appendix may be marginally legible

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Costs; *Early Childhood Education; *Instructional Materials Centers; Library Services; *Parent Education; *Parents; *Program Development
IDENTIFIERS *Community Coordinated Child Care; Kentucky (Louisville)

ABSTRACT

This paper describes briefly the development, funding and operation of a learning resources center for parents in Louisville, KY. Any parent may check out materials for a specified period of time (2-4 weeks). Available at the center are teacher activity materials, toys and records, information for operating a child development program, curriculum manuals, planning aids, educational program kits, audio visual aids and reference books. An early childhood specialist is available to parents for advice and assistance in using the materials. The center is open one day a week and has been well received in the community. (MS)

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LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER

INCREASING PARENT COMPETENCE

Jeanne Heberle

HISTORY

The goal of Community Coordinated Child Care of Louisville and Jefferson County is to upgrade the quality of care children in the community receive. How can an agency with an operating budget of $80,000, a staff of only four full-time professionals attempt to meet such a broad goal in an efficient, effective manner? In addition to the planning and coordination tasks of any 4-C agency, we are mandated, to negotiate contracts and to monitor and provide technical assistance to ten federally funded day care centers serving over 500 children.

Based on our assumption that parents are the first and most effective teachers of young children, we became convinced a learning resources center open to the public would be one of the most wide ranging services we could provide. We saw it as a lot of service for relatively little time and money. In addition, a learning resources center was something we could operate effectively on a small scale, but which would have unlimited expansion possibilities.

A formal needs assessment was hardly necessary. Our community (as so many others) has no place where resources in the area of early childhood are centralized and available to the public. Local university and college resources are limited to students and faculty. The public library, which operates a marvelous children's book section, does not have early childhood education as a separate subject in the card catalog. There was no place parents could be referred for help in the ordinary

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process of providing appropriate, nurturing experiences for their small children.

After drawing up proposals that were graduated in the scope of their goals and procedures, we sought funding until we found a source whose goals were compatible with our own.

The Lincoln Foundation of Louisville is a relatively small organization devoted to improving the educational opportunities of economically impoverished people in this area. They shared our conviction that early childhood is a critical period for educability.

We received $7,000 from the Lincoln Foundation as a start-up grant. We hired an early childhood specialist and a clerk to work one day a week. With permission to equip an unused hallway under our existing lease; and after five months of planning, selecting, purchasing and categorizing, cross referencing and labeling material, the 4-C Lincoln Foundation Learning Resources Center opened on January 14, 1976. Our claims of need for the service were immediately justified. Over 200 people attended the opening. Pre and post publicity was excellent. Our first year was an unqualified success. The Lincoln Foundation renewed our grant for a second year, and with the help of additional small grants and donations we have rented additional space, increased our equipment to include a film library and added time to our opening hours. We have kept operating expenses to less than 25% of our total budget.

What made us so newsworthy was our uniqueness. We were the only service of our kind in the area open to the public. Any

interested parent may use our library. Any agency in the area may refer parents to us, not only for advice on appropriate activities for small children, but for the resources and equipment to use in their own home. Many agencies use our materials for parent training sessions.

Interest in and use of the Center has continued to grow, and in spite of being open only seven hours a week, the membership has increased to 325, and we have circulated over 3,500 items since opening. We enroll an average of twenty new members each month.

PROCEDURES

The original equipment and materials for our Center were carefully chosen by consultation with experts, and by examining all the well known catalogues, and suppliers. Our criteria were educational value, durability, and in some cases, lack of general availability to the public, (e.g. high quality items not usually found in toy stores). However, we make most additions based on demand and an informal assessment of the value to parents. Of special value to parents is our ability to purchase expensive, high quality items whose usefulness to the child is limited to a relatively short stage of development. Parents and children can benefit from equipment without making an expensive investment in it. We also display and encourage use of home made equipment for which plans and ideas are available.

An early childhood specialist is available to parents for advice and technical assistance in the best ways of using the Center and the materials and equipment in it. We have a cross referenced card catalogue listing materials according to subject and/or skill involved. Each item has purchasing information on it. We encourage parents to bring children to the center and urge them to observe the child's interest and abilities before selecting toys.

We reach the general public through the news media. The Center sends occasional mailings to its membership. As a major means of announcing the Center's special activities, we use our quarterly 4-C Resource Report, which is sent to every agency and/or official in the area with even a remote connection to children.

Many of our parents come because their friends and neighbors recommend us. For example, especially rewarding to us is the frequent use by our building maintenance man. He has a compelling motive, "I think my boy is smarter than I am, I want him to have a better chance." Occasionally, he brings a neighbor with him. Some come from referrals from programs and agencies with a family services component. Specifically, we have parent memberships as a result of recommendations from:

a. Parent program specialists in federally funded programs in the area served.
b. Center directors and teachers seeking ways to insure continuity of classroom programs and home activities.

c. Social service agency workers throughout the area seeking materials and resources to increase parent competence.

d. Referrals from children's librarians.

Although we knew the need and interest existed, we were convinced that convenience and simplicity of procedure would be essential if our goal of widespread and continued use of the Center was to be met. We are centrally located with free, convenient parking. Our hours are 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., one day a week. Free membership can be obtained simply by presenting personal identification and signing an agreement to replace lost or damaged equipment. Most items can be borrowed for two weeks with an option of renewing by phone for two additional weeks. We repackage materials for convenience of use and storage. Advice and training are available, but not required, when using the Center.

We have suffered minimum loss and damage partly because of equipment durability, but partly because of the efficiency and attitude of the staff and members. Our financial loss due to unpaid damage or loss over the twelve months of operation has been only $100.

People have visited from other areas who seek to duplicate our service. At least one local day care center, utilizing our model, has opened a similar service reserved to families they serve. Another is in the process of fund raising to start one.

At present, our supplies do not nearly meet our demand. We are understaffed, over-crowded and over utilized. We are seeking funding to increase our time, equipment and services. We would like to be able to offer more formal methods of training in use of the materials to groups of parents and to people who work with parents. We would like to be more zealous in offering our services to the many agencies that have expressed interest. For example, the children's department of the public library, located nearby, has offered to enthusiastically endorse and publicize our service. The Department for Human Resources has expressed an interest in making more formal arrangements for parent referral through their many service agencies.

A specific area we are currently exploring as a result of specific requests is special equipment for the parents of mentally and physically handicapped children. We are seeking funds not only for materials but to have a special education consultant available.

In summary, our service has been well received because it is efficiently and conveniently offered. At present, many more people want to use us than want to fund us. So what else is new?

Prepared by,

Jeanne Heberle
Early Childhood Development Specialist

JH:sd

SUGGESTED READING:

Bell, T. H., Your Child's Intellect, A Guide to Home-Based Preschool Education, Olympus Publishing Company, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1972.

Cline, O. S., "Toy Joy; Toy Lending Project". School and Community, 62:17, January 1976.

Knight, Joan, "The Story Behind Toys N Things", Day Care and Early Education, 15-17, May/June 1976.

Nimnicht, Glen P. and Brown, Edna, "The Toy Library: Parents and Children Learning with Toys", Young Children, 110-116, December 1972.

Peluso, V., Games and Toys Pay Off; Setting up and Runing a Toy and Game Library, Instructor 85: 89-91, August 1975.

Rosenau, Fred and Tuck, Betty, "A Guide to Securing and Installing the Parent-Child Toy Lending Library", Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1972.

Turner, P., "Profile: Toy Libraries", Education Digest 41: 49-51, December 1975.

"Caboodles", Day Care and Early Education, 26, November 1975.

JH:sd

APPENDIX A

Sample forms Used in Lending Procedure

4 - C LINCOLN FOUNDATION
EARLY CHILDHOOD
LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER

Print Name _____

Address _____

_____

Phone _____

Affiliation, if any (center, community group, etc.)

_____

(complete other side)

ACCEPTANCE OF RESPONSIBILITY

I accept responsibility for the return of items I borrow from the 4-C Lincoln Foundation Early Childhood Learning Resources Center and agree to pay the replacement cost for loss of, or excessive damage to, such items. I also agree to pay any overdue fines.

_____
(Signature)

_____
(Date)

(complete other side)

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Membership Card

4-C LINCOLN FOUNDATION
EARLY CHILDHOOD
LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER

Date DUE _____
MATERIALS:

_____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ DATE _____

AFFILIATION _____

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Lending Record

J 40

EYE-HAND COORDINATION

Sorting Box & Accessories,
Developmental Learning Materials,
7440 Natchez Avenue, Niles, Illinois 60648

$22.00 12/75

E1

COMMUNITY HELPERS

Black Doctor Childcraft Education Corp.,
20 Kilmer Road, Edison, New Jersey 08817

$2.50 12/75

PUPPETS
BLACK EXPEHENCE

Book

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

WORKSHOP PROCEDURES: A COMPANION GUIDE TO RECIPES FOR FUN. Parents as Resource Project, 1970. 28 pp. $2.00.

The ideas presented in "Recipes" are translated into a workshop format for training parents and others working with young children.

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ANIMALS

Animal Learning Shapes. Ideal
Dick Blick. P.O. BOX 1267, Galesburg, Ill. 61401

$7.00 12/75

PUZZLES

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Card Catalogue Samples (Corner code indicates shelf location)

APPENDIX C

COMMUNITY COORDINATED CHILD CARE OF LOUISVILLE AND JEFFERSON COUNTY

1355 South 3rd Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40208
Telephone (502) 636-1358

MEMBER AGENCY

4-C
LINCOLN FOUNDATION
EARLY CHILDHOOD
LEARNING RESOURCES
CENTER

COMMUNITY COORDINATED CHILD CARE
1355 South Third Street
Louisville, Kentucky 40208
Telephone (502) 636-1358

LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER BROCHURE

WHAT?

A lending library of:

1. Teacher Activity Materials
2. Toys and Records
3. Information for Operating a Child Development Program
4. Curriculum Manuals
5. Planning Aids
6. Educational Program Kits
7. Audio visual aids
8. Reference Books

WHERE?

The Center is located in the 4-C office on the second floor of the Century Court building, 1355 South Third Street, Louisville, Ky. 40208.

HOW?

The operation of the center is similar to that of the public library. A person applies for and receives a membership card. He/she is then able to check out materials for a specified period of time ranging from two to four weeks.

WHEN?

The center is open on Wednesdays from 9:30 to 4:30 P.M. Call the 4-C office, 636-1358 for further information.

WHO?

The center is desiged primarily for use by teachers, administrators, child care centers, students and parents; however, it is open to the public.

MATERIALS AVAILABLE

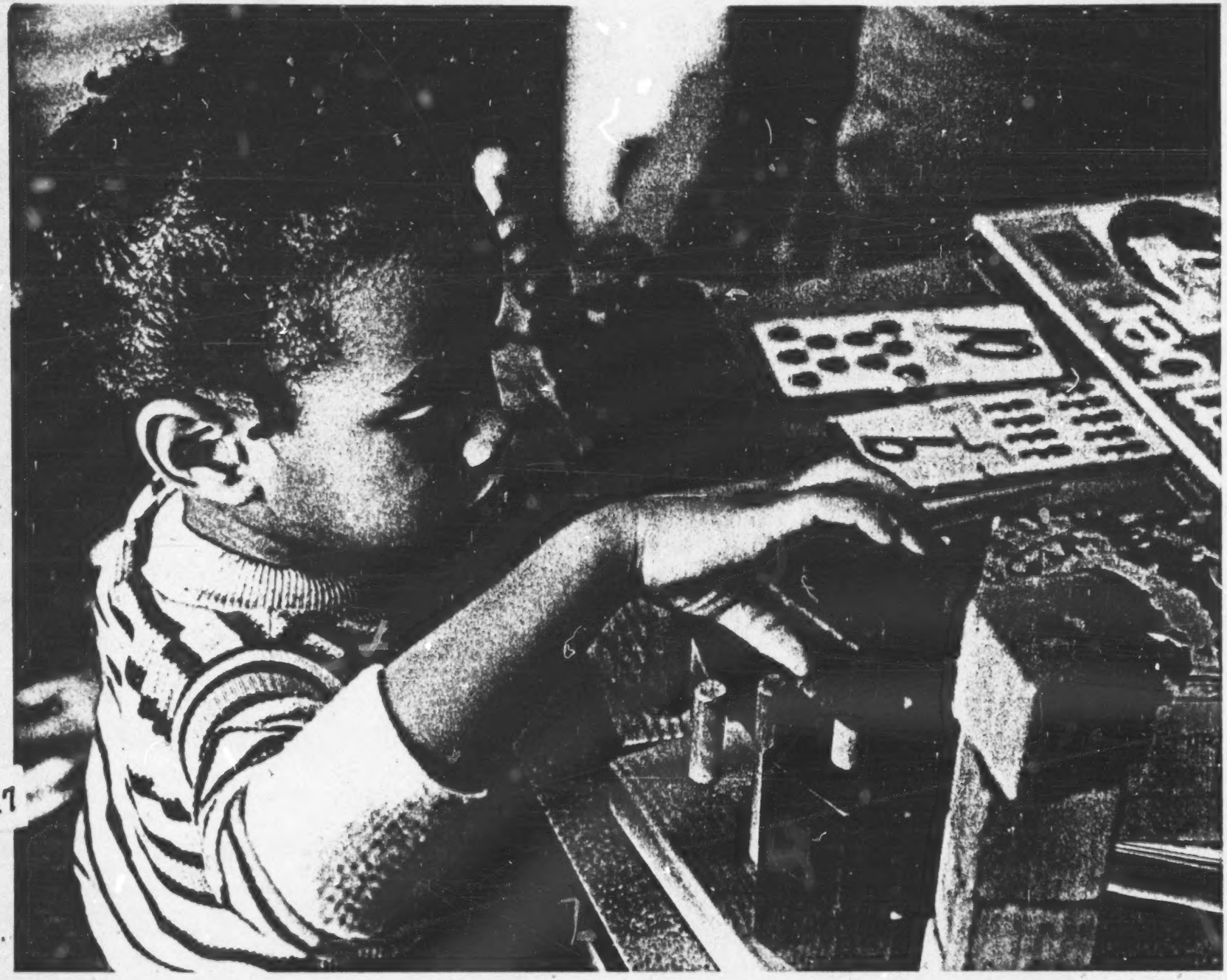
The center will have a balanced amount of resource books and materials that will reflect sound child development theory as well as actual toys and equipment for use in implementing programs.

The following subject areas will be well represented in the center:

1. Gross and fine motor activities.
2. Imaginative play.
3. Creative activities.
4. Music and rhythm.
5. Eye-hand coordination.
6. Perception.
7. Language development.
8. Measurements, mathematics.
9. Science.
10. Nutrition.
11. Black experience.
12. Parent involvement.

LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER BROCHURE

CHILDLEA



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